

The Ballarat Naturalist

December 2012



60th Anniversary Bbq - 17 Nov 12012

Moorabool Reservoir Lodge



Back Row L to R: Steve Douglas, Melinda Bray (Dalman), Claire Dalman, Peter Dalman (President), John Gregurke, Adrienne Schreuder, John Mildren, Les Hanrahan (Treasurer), Wayne McGuire.

Second Row L to R: Bill Bray, Denis Thurgood, Helen Young-Harvey, Fran Hanrahan (Vice-President), Dulcie Brooke, Bill Murphy, Peter Billing, Margaret Thomas, Bill Lewis, John Morrish, Graham O'Neill.

Third Row L to R: Elspeth Swan, Heather Dalman, Elaine Gregurke, Val Hocking, Elizabeth Thurgood, Lorraine Fink, Joanne Binns Drogenik, Graeme Reynolds.

Front Row L to R: Carol Hall (Secretary), Anna Bray, Emma O'Neill, William Bray, Kate O'Neill, Hugh Binns Drogenik (Greg Binns' grandson holding Greg's hat and diary).

Snippets of FNCB history *from Clare & Peter Dalman's talks*

Predecessors: First, Ballarat Field Club and Science Society formed June 1882. Established to study natural and physical sciences. Made statements of concern re the environment. No record of its demise.

Second, in May 1915 re-establishment of old science club with lectures on natural history and other topics of scientific interest. Activities included excursions in drays and a wild-flower show. Last meeting in Nov 1918.

Beginning of FNCB



On 28 Oct, 1952 Bill Lewis was among 17 people who met to form the current FNCB.

The first meeting was held in the building of Dana St School the then Teachers' Training College.

Objective of the Club: *To stimulate interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation and protection of the natural environment.*

Photo: Bill Lewis who attended the first FNCB meeting in 1953

A list of some conservation issues acted on

- Protection of Lake Wendouree birds
- Reduction of deer numbers in Smythesdale-Scarsdale forest
- Use of 1080 poison for rabbit control in Wyperfeld NP
- Bulldozing of Sherbrook Forest for planting pines
- Planting of Lake Wendouree islands with suitable vegetation
- Protest about water skiing on Lake Wendouree
- Preservation of Mt Beckworth and Clunes Swamp
- Letter to Forest Com. re reservation of 200 acre near Bannockburn

Initially Club meet in homes of

- Smith
- Lewis
- Netherway
- Wheeler
- Crimmin
- etc.

An early member, **Bob Smith**, was a furrier by trade and had a wonderful knowledge of birds and native animals. Initially he belonged to the old school of ornithologists. He shot birds, skinned them and preserved the skins. When discussing bird observations, skins were produced to prove observations. A Wedge-tailed Eagle was a prize possession. He gave a pair of parrots to a Swiss naturalists who placed them in the Berne Museum.

Memoir from Olivia Herbert

In 1955 Kiata held a wild flower and nature show to mark the opening of the Lowan Sanctuary, Little Desert. A carload of FNCB members helped stage, as described by a Melbourne naturalist, “the best nature show to be seen anywhere”.

At the ‘56 Show, Bob Smith’s collection was confiscated by FWD. It was carefully transported to the Melbourne Museum. Years later Smith was honoured by the Museum.

Words of Greg Binns, Dec 1977

The club has been developed and served by many competent and knowledgeable naturalists. They have created a legacy of fine example in effective field work and recording on which has been based realistic campaigning for important tracts of natural habitat.

The objectives of the Club can be best achieved through shared experience, study and knowledge and by combining of resources in order to facilitate activities that may, in some way ensure that the vital sections of our natural heritage shall remain for future generations.

Mary White

Many current members remember going to Anglesea for excursion and being lead by Mary. For many years her work with Angair and developing community appreciation of the local rich floral habitat, was well known. What must not be overlooked or forgotten is her persistence in preserving land near Uргуarts Bluff from the relentless spread of holiday homes and other buildings. A reserve named after her is a tribute to a woman who gave so much: her physical work of weed eradication, her political lobbying, her financial contributions, and encouragement of others to similarly contribute so land could be bought and saved.

The Yalla Y Poora Grassland Reserve

Mike Wick's

Mike's talk was timed to precede a visit by the Club to 'grasslands' on the following Sunday, and to coincide with the flowering period for many grass and other herbaceous species. The field visit was to the ***Yalla Y Poora Grassland Reserve*** - an area with which Mike has been closely associated for many years as an amateur naturalist. We were given a brief history of the reserve, which lies on the Victorian Volcanic Plain but near the northern edge so underlain by goldfields geology. Following many centuries of Aborigine residence, the area was first visited by Major Mitchell in 1836 and then settled by Europeans in 1839 when John Stevens brought sheep to the area. He was joined by Alfred Taddy Thomson in 1841. The name ***Yalla Y Poora*** is said to mean 'pollarded trees' - perhaps a term derived from multi-stemmed trees arising from past flood damage. Later the Protector of Aborigines covering that area was G. A. Robinson from Tasmania, and he reported observing numerous women harvesting the yams of 'Mrnong' after burning the grass to make the 'Murnong' easier to find - a practice opposed by local European settlers. In 1856 the property was sold to J.B. Were - whose family held the land for around 100 years. In 1945 part of the land was appropriated by the government for settlement of soldiers from WW2. In 1948 an area of 1.7 hectares was reserved for 'recreational use'. Windbreaks of pines were planted and there were tennis courts, infant welfare clinic, and a community hall.

Yalla Y Poora Grassland Reserve has been under the management of BEN (Ballarat Environmental Network) since 2005. Its main characteristic is *Themeda*-dominated basalt grassland, surrounded by intensively cultivated and grazed farmland. About 150 native plant species have been recorded, plus approximately 50 exotic taxa including several weedy species that have required major control over the years. Woody species on the grassland include Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*). There are around 25 bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and numerous fungi have been listed, some of which arrived with the pine trees. Records of fauna are also kept.

Management and Research

Mature grassland on the site requires active management to avoid loss of important species. Ecological burning is best undertaken in Autumn when most species are still dormant. A continuous process of removal of exotic species (like Capeweed) is necessary, as seed of some species is viable for

over 20 years. The reserve has been utilized for several research projects over the years, mainly by University groups. Examples of topics on which articles have been published research are: *Abundance, species richness, and feeding preferences of introduced molluscs in native grasslands of Victoria* (2007) and *Plant traits and local extinctions in natural grasslands along an urban-rural gradient* (2005).

There is ongoing research into the biology and ecology of threatened plant species. Monitoring of the vegetation allows an assessment of the effects of management practices on species composition, including the status of the orchids and other species.

John Petheram

Photo: *Yalla Y Poora Reserve on 17 Nov 2012 showing junction between areas mown in August 2011 and unmown areas. The unmown area (left) has much more *Vulpia* sp. and *Briza minor* than the much greener mown area, which could compete with prevalent orchids such as *Diuris* and *Prasophyllum*.*



Excursion - Beaufort Grasslands

Leader, Mike Wicks

What made the trip out to Yalla Y Poora exceptional was not just the quality of the reserve we visited but the fact that our guide to it had a more detailed and historical knowledge of the block than many of us do of our own gardens. Mike Wicks has been visiting the reserve regularly since 2002 and by now has spent hundreds of hours working and studying in it. He knows about every plant in it as well as the stories behind the various patches of flowers, vegetation types and research sites contained within its 1.7 hectares.

After a rendezvous in Beaufort we travelled along the Eurambeen road passing a completely ‘unnatural’ and unusual tree. This permanent installation, made by a local metal worker is a Christmas tree only seen in its true glory at night when hundreds of reflectors, etc. twinkle in your car’s headlights as it is approached.

Just past the Cross Roads fire station we stopped along a wider than normal grass verge and walked amongst a grassland rich in surviving native grasses, annual flowers and orchids. Perhaps for most of us the highlight was the fact that there were so many Basalt Sun-orchids such that at a distance the grassland had a purple haze about it. While we were there Mike dug out 4 specimens of the very invasive South African Weed Orchid (*Disa bracteata*).

John G. kindly sent me this list of flowers he recorded from that small spot.

Sheep’s Burr, *Acaena ovina*; Milkmaids, *Burchardia umbellate*; Milky beauty heads, *Calocephalus lacteus*; Pink Bindweed, *Convolvus erubescens*; Golden Cowslips, *Diuris behrii*; Blue Devil, *Eryngium ovinum*; Scaly Buttons, *Leptorhynchos squamatus*; Hoary Sunray, *Leucochrysum albicans ssp albicans var. tricolor*; Basalt Sun-orchid, *Thelymitra gregaria*

Once at the old Yalla Y Poora Grassland Reserve we met Joan and Nick from the Ararat club and began our explorations. At times carefully walking single file to avoid plants not yet flowering we headed for various markers, some Mike had put out to show us special plants, others were for plants currently being researched and others for orchids etc. One such experimental plot now consists of a sad straggle of 6 Large Headed



Photo: Verge near Cross Roads

Important notes re Dec and Feb excursions

Dec 9 Afternoon excursion leaves from the usual place at 1.30 pm for Corindhap. Bring requirements for afternoon tea and evening picnic.

Feb 3 Leaves at 8 am for excursion to Western Treatment Plant, near Werribee. If wish to attend you need to notify John Gregurke ASAP as the number is limited to places in cars with permit holders. Then if need to withdraw from list notify JG

Groundsels, *Senecio macrocarpus*, all badly aphid-infested. They are all that remain of the 20 originally planted out! But elsewhere rich clumps of blue pincushions, *Brunonia Australis*. Trigger plants, *stylidium*; spur velleia, *Velleia paradoxa*; peach heath, *Lissanthe strigosa* (reshooting from rootstock remaining after burn offs) and Onion orchids, *Microtis unifolia* etc. lead us onwards. It was wonderful grassland and with Mike's guidance through it we all had a super morning.



Photo: Lake Goldsmith

After lunch the convoy drove along the southern edge of Lake Goldsmith with most of the water surface densely covered in waterbirds it was a great place for the binoculars. Black winged stilts, grey teal, and red necked avocets were highlights amongst the thousands of ducks and swans.

The afternoon concluded with a cuppa at Thurgood's place in Beaufort.

Elizabeth Thurgood

Proposed Christmas Gathering



Reports from 2012 ANN get together in Canberra

Seven of our club members were fortunate to join a very well-organised and enjoyable gathering of naturalists in Canberra in October. I shared accommodation with a Geelong friend at a Country club, one of the bus pick-up points and I also enjoyed some early morning walks to the golf-course lake which had a variety of bird life, including large wood duck families swimming in the still water- a photographer's delight. Each day a masked lapwing pair guarded its eggs in the car park area.

Some highlights of the week were: exploring with guides, the Native Botanic Gardens, which began with early morning bird watching, followed by breakfast there.; a relaxing boat trip on Lake Burley Griffin; seeing the sights of Canberra; the last of Floriade; a bus tour of the Embassies.

We had a bus trip to the newly planted National Arboretum, where blocks of 100 different rarer tree species from around the world are now planted in various patterns, for fire resistance and quick growing.



Photo: Wildlife in the Botanic Gardens

The Deep Space Communication centre at Tidbinbilla was inspiring as we viewed a Video of the tension of the recent Mars Landing and the latest photos of the planet.

A behind-the-scenes tour that I was part of, was viewing the CSIRO National Wildlife collection. Bird species make up the biggest part of the collection and are kept in drawers in an atmospheric controlled room. As well, all recently collected species have their DNA stored in a freezer

We went on a number of bush walks, both around Canberra and to Namadji National Park. We saw 4 or 5 varieties of Orchids, including white Caladenias and Donkey *Diuris* sp and Wax lip but in small quantities. Occasionally Bulbine lilies and purple Indigofera shrubs were also seen. On two evenings we were treated to interesting guest speakers at the CSIRO

<p>2013 Autumn Seana Camp Week-end 15-18 March Merricks Uniting Church Camp Information and bookings available soon</p>
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theatre, including a fascinating talk with audio on Lyrebirds. The Get-together concluded with a dinner at a TAFE training restaurant which included a few participants speaking on “Why I became a Naturalist”, plus invitations to the next ANN in Hobart in 2014.

Val Hocking

Mulligans Flat Woodland Reserve is an area of Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland adjoining the northern residential suburbs of Canberra. A predator-proof fence encloses the 1500-hectare reserve. Gates are self-closing, monitored with cameras and have remote telemetry to notify the ranger if a gate has been left open. Tasmanian Bettongs have been released into this protected area to aid in returning the area to a natural condition after a long grazing history. The scratching of Bettongs loosen the soil and help to recycle nutrients. Val Hocking was one person who saw a Bettong.

The National Arboretum is being established on 250 hectares of land on the western edge of Canberra. The area was a pine plantation until burnt in the 2003 bushfire. The vision is for 100 forests and 100 gardens. Planting began 2007 and it will be opened in 2013 to coincide with the centenary of Canberra. The forests will feature threatened and symbolic trees from Australia and around the world. Camden White Gum *Eucalyptus benthamii* has 10 naturally occurring plants on the Camden River. Now a forest of several hundred have been planted and every second tree will be harvested to raise funds for the arboretum.



Photo: Young trees in National Arboretum

The next ANN Get-together will be hosted by Tasmanian FNC at Kingston, 15 km sth of Hobart, 18-26 Oct 2014. It will include visits to a wide range of natural habitats within 100 km of Hobart: coastal sandy beaches, rocky shores, forests and alpine areas of button grass plains. A variety of geology, conifers, fungi, lichen, endemic and pelagic birds, fossils and mammals plus other natural history features will make an interesting program.

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Incorporated

A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135

Minutes of General Meeting 2012

November 2

Opening and Apologies.

General Meeting attendance: Peter welcomed 30 members and friends.

Apologies: Sue McLachlan, Chris & Anna Baulch, Val Hocking, Zelda martin, Margaret martin, Bill Murphy.

Moved Paul Norquay

Seconded Fran Hanrahan.

Carried.

Minutes of previous meeting: accepted. *Moved John Gregurke* *Seconded John Morrish. Carried*

Business Arising from Previous Meeting: 60th Anniversary – see General Business

Correspondence.

IN

Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee October 2012

Castlemaine FNC: Castlemaine Naturalist October & November 2012

Field Nats News, Nov 2012;

Bendigo Bank: Copies of earlier Statements; current statement

Green Action News

Apology from Tony Johns re 60th anniversary; acceptances from Graeme Reynolds, Margaret Rotheram, Bill Lewis.

VNPA appeal

Flyer: Vox at Art Gallery.

Brochures on Significant Trees of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.

Planning for Ballarat West Growth Area newsletter

Environment Victoria appeal

Department of Justice – info re the new Incorporations Act, instructions for clubs.

Victorian Naturalist October 2012

OUT: Request for copies of previous bank statements.

Moved

Joyce Cuttle.

Seconded John Morrish. Carried.

Business Arising from Correspondence: nil

Reports

Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$6044.73 Income \$0 Expenses \$196.84 Closing balance: \$ 5847.89

Moved: Les Harahan.

Seconded: Claire Dalman.

Carried.

General Business

60th Birthday: Members reminded to bring picnic necessities, memorabilia etc.

2013 Syllabus: Members asked for ideas.

Dalmans had purchased the book *Shaping a Nation* at \$70 at the ANN campout, thinking it might be a good buy for the club library. Motion "That the club reimburses Claire & Peter Dalman for the book and adds it to the library".

Moved: Elizabeth Thurgood. Seconded John Petheram. Carried.

Show & Tell/Field Reports

- 2.11.12 Miners Rest – Claire Dalman noted that the brolgas were back after a short absence and one was sitting on a nest. Also on the swamp were ~20 White-necked Herons, swans with cygnets, many Purple Swamphens, a few White-faced Herons.
- 30.10.12 Peter Muller at Rokewood Junction, Dereel saw the South African orchid *Disa bracteata* – several plants.
- 29.10.12 John Gregurke at Burrumbeet Racecourse noted that the brolga seen last month has abandoned the first nest and is now nesting on the south side of the swamp.
- 25.10.12 John Petheram at Mt Beckworth saw many orchids, and a large Bolete near the cork oaks.
- 29.10.12 Carol Hall at Mt Beckworth at the dam found large numbers of Chocolate Lilies and Spotted Sun Orchids *T. ixiodes*, a small group of Rabbit Ears *T. antennifera*, a glade of Tall Sundews beautifully backlit by the sun at 8.30am, and a lone Salmon Sun Orchid *T. rubra*.
- 2.11.12 John Petheram at Mt Buninyong found 2 Wood Duck chicks fallen from their nest.
- 1.11.12 Wayne McGuire at Lake Burrumbeet spotted brolgas heading NW; and heard Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoos calling.
- 2.10.12 in Perth WA John Morrish noted that two Black Duck landed on and paddled around a backyard saltwater swimming pool.

Excursion arrangements

Meet Mike Wicks at the Rotunda in Beaufort at 10.15am.

Syllabus item

Mike Wicks – "Grasslands". Mike spoke in detail about his interest in Yalla Y Poora, giving a history of the property and noting both native and exotic plants. He was thanked by Peter Dalman.

Supper.

CALENDAR 2012

December

Fri 7 *Roadside vegetation management* - Frank Carland, Environmental
co-ordinator VicRoads

Sun 9 Corindhap & Rokewood (pm , bring tea)

Jan Tues 22 Committee Meeting

February

Fri 1 *Vikings, Volcanoes & ice – the making of Iceland* -Carol Hall ,
Geographer/Club member

Sun 3 *Western Treatment Plant: bird watching , near Werribee -*
Permit holders & members

Committee

President..... Peter Dalman

Vice –President Fran Hanrahan

Secretary..... Carol Hall

Treasurer Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman.....

Val Hocking

John Gregurke.....

John Mildren

Elsbeth Swan

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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